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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9543
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3913
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0126
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4528
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0395
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000469

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TAGS: PGOV SOCI PINR UZ

SUBJECT: SAMARQAND GOVERNOR THE LATEST TO GET SACKED AS
SHAKE-UP CONTINUES

Classified By: Political Officer Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: State-controlled press reported on April 16 that President Karimov traveled to Samarcand, where he relieved Provincial Governor (Hokim) Azamkhon Bakhromov of his duties, appointing the Bukharan-born Uktam Baroev in his place. This is the fourth provincial governor to be fired since Karimov began his new term in 2008, following changes at the helm in Ferghana, Khorezm, and Surkhandaryo Provinces.

There are reports that the deposed Bakhromov is now under house arrest in Samarcand, and that the Provincial Prosecutor and Chief of Internal Affairs have also been fired in this shake-up. Rather than merely a desire to bring in a fresh team for the new term, the Samarcand officials may have personally angered Karimov, a native son. End summary.

¶2. (C) The main state-controlled newspaper "Narodnoe Slovo" (People's Word) reported that Karimov convened a session of the Council of People's Deputies of Samarcand Region on April 16. As was the case in three other provinces since January (Ferghana, Khorezm, and Surkhandaryo), Karimov removed the Hokim from his duties. Bakhromov only had the title of Acting Hokim of Samarcand Province, and was only in the office since December 2006. His successor Baroev is a Bukharan, who is tasked with developing local industry and attracting more foreign investment.

¶3. (C) Since the 1930s Tashkent has always treated Samarcand as a sensitive case. The majority of the population in the broader region is Uzbek, but the majority in Samarcand city itself is Tajik, and has its own powerful clan that rivals Uzbek-dominated clans. Karimov himself is a Samarcand native and seems to tread carefully with Samarcand affairs, which is probably why he had not officially appointed a Hokim in the past one and one-half years.

¶4. (C) The website uzmetronom.com further reported that the deposed Bakhromov is now under house arrest, and that the Provincial Prosecutor and Chief of Internal Affairs have also been fired. The website also speculates that the Samarcand

City Mayor, Sukhrob Rafikov, will also soon be removed from his post.

Comment:

¶5. (C) Karimov has publicly lambasted fired hokims at these special regional sessions for poor performance, notably in Ferghana and Khorezm earlier this year. However, it is unusual for a number of officials to be relieved at once in a wholesale change and even more surprising if Bakhromov is indeed under house arrest. This may suggest that the authorities in this sensitive province personally angered Karimov, and we will watch for any signs that the clans are restless. It is also interesting that one-third of the country's provincial governors have been replaced in the first few months of Karimov's new term, which may be an attempt to deflect responsibility for continued poor economic conditions and convey the appearance that Karimov is striving to field a team that will set things straight.

Bio Note for Barnoev

¶6. (SBU) Prior to his appointment as Hokim of Samargand, Bukhara-born Uktam Isaevich Barnoev worked in the Cabinet of Ministers, where he supervised the agricultural complex. More recently, he served as the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Water Management.

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